

MEMORANDUM

In a secret despatch of 20th May on the strategic importance of the Pacific Islands, the New Zealand Government gave their views on ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> Report by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (C.I.D. Paper No.1327-B) and also stated: "His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom might possibly think it advisable that representatives of all three countries (Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand) should meet at some suitable point to discuss Pacific Island matters."

This despatch was considered by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, whose Report, dated July 23rd, is in C.I.D. Paper No.1455-B, and their final paragraph states, with reference to the proposed conference: "We are not clear whether such discussions are intended to cover political, commercial and financial questions, or would merely be confined to the strategic, etc. aspect." The composition of the United Kingdom Delegation to this conference would, in their view, vary according to the nature of the topics to be discussed, ~~so that~~<sup>for</sup> if the discussions "are to be of a broader nature it might be advisable for the Air Officer Commanding, Singapore, and the Commander in Chief, China, to be represented, rather than that the discussions should be conducted by officers under the New Zealand Government."

On July 27th, the C.I.D. considered this Report (Minutes of the 331st Meeting) and agreed "..... (c) That the Dominions Office should take up with the New Zealand Government the question of a conference between representatives of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, to discuss Pacific Island matters."

On September 9th a reply was sent (secret telegram No. 116) to New Zealand dealing with certain points raised in their despatch of 20th May, and promising that a further communication would be sent as regards the question of a conference.

On 26th October, a semi-official letter was accordingly sent from the Dominions Office to members of the Admiralty, Air Ministry, C.I.D., Colonial Office, Foreign Office and Treasury, to ascertain whether these Departments considered that the conference, if held, should be confined to strategic matters or whether political and other questions should be included. In this letter, the question was also raised as to whether the United Kingdom High Commissioner in New Zealand, who would by the time the conference met have taken up his office, should not also attend the conference in addition to the Service representatives suggested by the Chiefs of Staff, and the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, as suggested by the Secretary of State for the Colonies at the C.I.D. Meeting on 27th July.

The reply to this letter from the Treasury was that the best course would be to leave to New Zealand the nature of the subjects to be discussed, and the C.I.D. Secretariat shared this view. The Foreign Office view was strongly in favour of a conference on the broadest lines, and the Air Ministry agreed that progress would probably be difficult if political issues were excluded. The Colonial Office are in favour of the holding of a conference and suggest that its nature should be one of the subjects for discussion at the forthcoming inter-departmental meeting.

Dominions Office,

21st November, 1938.